

## Canoe v. Trump: Local Paddlers Sue Over Potomac Access Next To President's Golf Course

Jacob Fenston



A Secret Service vehicle enters the Trump National Golf Club in Sterling, Va. The club will host a Republican Party fundraiser tonight.

Pablo Martinez Monsivais / AP

Plenty of people are after President Trump. There's Robert Mueller and his "angry Democrats," there's Stormy Daniels and her tell-all book. But the president has yet to face the powerful Washington canoe lobby.

Thursday morning, a local paddling group filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration over a restrictive security zone along the Potomac River adjacent to the Trump National Golf Club in Loudoun County.

[Canoe Cruisers Complaint 20180918 1pm](#) by [wamu885](#) on Scribd

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND  
SOUTHERN DIVISION**

CANOE CRUISERS ASSOCIATION OF )  
GREATER WASHINGTON DC, )  
1105 Highwood Road )  
Rockville, Montgomery County, MD 20851 )

Plaintiff, )

v. )

Case No. \_\_\_\_\_

KARL L. SCHULTZ, Commandant of the United )  
States Coast Guard, in His Official Capacity, )  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE, )  
Washington, DC 20593-7000, )

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, )  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE, )  
Washington, DC 20593-7000, )

KIRSTJEN M. NIELSEN, Secretary of Homeland )  
Security, in Her Official Capacity, )  
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW, )  
Washington, DC 20016, and )

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF )  
HOMELAND SECURITY, )  
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW, )  
Washington, DC 20016, )

- - -

“The concern is river access,” says Barbara Brown, chairman of the [Canoe Cruisers Association](#), a local group of about 250 canoers and kayakers, who frequent the Potomac, especially the section near Trump’s golf course.

Since Trump’s inauguration, he has visited the course dozens of times. Each time, the Coast Guard restricts access to the river. In July 2017, the Coast Guard announced a new policy — a permanent security zone, from shore to shore along two miles of the river, allowing a quick closure of the entire section, any time Trump or another high ranking official was at the golf course.

According to the rule [published in the federal register](#) at the time, the purpose was “to protect high-ranking United States officials and the public, mitigate potential terrorist acts, and enhance public and U.S. navigable waterway safety and security.”

“The whole thing seems absolutely silly, actually,” says Matt Markoff, who runs Calleva, an outdoor education organization based right across from the golf course, on the Maryland side of the Potomac. “I can completely understand and respect security and the need for security for the president,” says Markoff.

But, he says, it’s pretty apparent his canoe groups of kids are not a threat.





A kayaker on the GW Canal.

Canoe Cruisers

---

According to the lawsuit, 636 comments were filed, all of them expressing concern with the security zone.

Canoe Cruisers wants the Coast Guard to change the rule, shrinking the security zone to leave free passage on the Maryland side of the river.

“We’re not trying to make trouble,” says Barbara Brown of Canoe Cruisers. “We just want the river to have the access that it should have.”

Matt Markoff, who isn’t part of the lawsuit, says the biggest problem is that there is no notice when there’s a closure. He’ll send boats out, only to have canoes filled with kids forced off the river. “I just hope they return the public land back to the public,” he says.

 FILED UNDER: [DC](#), [Environment](#), [Local](#), [Trump Effect](#), [Virginia](#).



JACOB FENSTON 

Jacob Fenston is WAMU's environment reporter.